

Secret

NSA review completed



Intelligence Memorandum

Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower Developments in Indochina

25X1

Secret

25

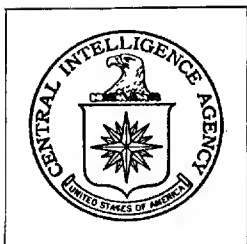
ER IM 73-19-20
26 June 1973

25X1

Copy No.

Page Denied

26 June 1973



**Recent Communist Logistical
and Manpower Developments
in Indochina**

North Vietnamese logistic and manpower activity remained at a low level throughout much of Indochina during the past week, although there were moderate increases in the level of resupply traffic in those areas where the rains are not an inhibiting factor.

- Moderately heavy vehicle activity continued to be detected in the southern North Vietnamese Panhandle.
- The transportation campaign previously reported in northern South Vietnam is still in progress. This activity is being undertaken by military logisticians, but some of it undoubtedly is in support of the growing number of civilians being settled there by the North Vietnamese.
- Combat troops headed for southern Laos were again detected moving in the North Vietnamese Panhandle during the past week. In addition, eight new special-purpose groups headed for South Vietnam were detected in the system.
- The headquarters of Binh Tram 42 has relocated into South Vietnam from southern Laos, reflecting continued North Vietnamese emphasis on augmenting the new supply corridor in western South Vietnam.

Note: Comments and queries regarding this memorandum are welcomed. They may be directed to

25X1

25X1

DISCUSSION

Recent Logistical Developments

1. In North Vietnam, numerous intercepted messages detailed the transfer between storage facilities in the Vinh area of nearly all classes of supplies, including substantial quantities of ordnance. An unidentified transshipment point located south of Vinh reported that it had received about 220 tons of ammunition between 29 May and 15 June, and another unit in the same area received 22 tons of 57-mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) ammunition on 15 June alone. COMINT also revealed a shipment of 52 tons of assorted types of ammunition moving to northern Laos and three tons of AAA ammunition specifically earmarked for delivery to South Vietnam on 15 June.

2. Farther south in the North Vietnamese Panhandle, substantial logistic activity continues from Quang Khe south to the DMZ. About 40 vehicles per day moved in each direction across the Troc River north of Dong Hoi in the Binh Tram 26 area during the period. A subordinate unit of the binh tram reported on 15 June that it had received some 1,100 tons of cargo that day, including more than 200 tons of explosives as well as various foodstuffs and quartermaster supplies. Water transportation also is being used in the area.

3. NVA cargo movements through the Laotian Panhandle have slowed to a snail's pace. Aerial photography showed few or no trucks moving on most roads, and very little COMINT was received from the entire area. Construction and upgrading activity was observed on selected sections of the road network, however, as the North Vietnamese continue their efforts to upgrade the central Panhandle supply corridor.

4. In Cambodia there was again no field reporting on North Vietnamese logistic activities. Communications intercepted from Khmer Communist units along the Mekong and on several highways extending from Phnom Penh indicated problems of low morale because of prolonged fighting and ammunition shortages. One message requested "Vietnamese" aid in providing ammunition to a unit cut off from its own supply sources. Other COMINT revealed the implementation of plans to increase rice stockpiles in the Communist-controlled southwestern and southeastern areas of the country to stave off shortages expected later this year.

5. NVA logistic activity in the northern regions of South Vietnam showed a moderate upswing during the week as the Communist "transportation campaign" in the Binh Tram 12 area continued. Logistic



[redacted]

units from the DMZ to at least as far south as the A Shau Valley again reported heavy vehicle movements in support of the campaign. An unidentified NVA unit in the Cua Viet River area of northeastern Quang Tri Province reported handling more than 4,300 vehicles – including more than 2,700 cargo trucks – during the period 14-20 June. In an intercepted message of 20 June, Binh Tram 12 was noted commending two subordinate transportation battalions which "had exceeded their goal of 600 tons" for an unspecified period. Other COMINT reported on activity in the western regions of northern South Vietnam; the 41st Engineer Regiment operating north of the A Shau Valley reported on 21 June that it had received 188 vehicles transporting 634 tons of cargo and had placed 330 tons of cargo in protected trenches.

6. The heaviest activity is on the north-south routes constituting the Communists' western supply corridor. Recent evidence that North Vietnam has sent some 20,000 civilians into South Vietnam's Military Region 1 suggests that part of the logistic activity in this region is to support the new civilian population. This may be particularly true along the western border, where road construction laborers reportedly were told recently that their work along the Route 608/616/548 complex will benefit "numerous settlements" North Vietnam plans to build in the A Shau Valley and Khe Sanh areas. The composition of supply movements through the North Vietnamese Panhandle, which in recent weeks have been largely food and quartermaster goods, also indicates that much of the current effort could be directed toward civilian support.

7. Further evidence of the shifting of resources eastward from Laos into South Vietnam to accommodate the expanded use of the western corridor was received during the period. At least two and possibly three storage complexes were relocated from Route 922 in southern Laos to Route 548, north of A Shau in South Vietnam. In addition, Binh Tram 42, formerly operating in the Laotian Panhandle, was relocated as of 20 June along Route 548 in the same area (see paragraphs 13 and 14).

25X1

8. Farther south, [redacted] current Communist purchasing efforts in local markets located along Routes 1 and 1A, extending north and northeast from Saigon. [redacted] COSVN rear service groups have established a major logistical apparatus to provide Communist elements deployed in MR 3 with supplies -- mostly food, medicine, and gasoline -- purchased locally. Reportedly, marketplaces lying along segments of Routes 1 and 1A in Hau Nghia and Binh Duong Provinces are controlled by South Vietnamese forces by day, but are open to the VC at night. The VC/NVA purchasing agents are offering generous terms, including interest-free loans, free rice rations, and usually a guarantee of about 30% profit.

25X1



25X1

25X1

25X1

501639 2-73 CIA

Recent Manpower Developments

Personnel Infiltration

9. During the reporting period, we received evidence confirming the departure of Group 5058 from North Vietnam on 18 June. This group, which is en route to southern Laos, is an artillery-associated group with an estimated strength of 250 troops. Its detection, however, does not increase our estimate of total dry season infiltration starts from North Vietnam, as shown in Table 1, because its existence had been accounted for previously. This group, together with the one reported last week, is believed to be part of a block of artillery groups which infiltrated into Laos late last year. We do not know why these groups were apparently delayed.

Table 1

Infiltration Starts, by Season

Destination	1 Sep 71 - 25 Jun 72	1 Sep 72 - 25 Jun 73
Total	136,000	94,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	35,000	33,000
MR 5	17,000	9,000
B-3 Front	30,000	14,000
COSVN	38,000	26,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	16,000	12,000

10. Eight special-purpose groups -- aggregating about 175 personnel -- were observed in the infiltration pipeline during the past week. Four of these groups are destined for the COSVN area, and three others are traveling to Military Region 5. The location of all these groups in southern Laos and northeastern Cambodia suggests that they departed from North Vietnam before 15 June. Table 1 shows our estimate of infiltration starts since 1 September, by season and destination (excluding northern Laos), while Table 2 lists starts by month since 1 January 1973.

11. Since the 27 January cease-fire, some 26,000 North Vietnamese personnel, including 20,000 combat troops, have started south. These personnel plus the 25,000 personnel who were in the pipeline as of 27 January, bring our estimate of infiltrators since the cease-fire to about 51,000 personnel.

Table 2

**Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline
Since 1 January 1973**

	Total ¹	Special- Purpose ²
January	20,500	1,600
February	10,200	2,100
March	3,250	2,250
April	1,925	1,200
May	7,175	300
June (1-25)	1,525	450

1. Including gap-filled groups, except Groups 7001-7009 and 5057. Assuming that these groups departed after 1 January, about 5,000 combat troops would be added to the infiltration starts shown above.

2. Including those groups which were initially detected without a specific strength but which have been assigned an average strength of 35.

12. The greatest number of infiltrators since the cease-fire have gone to COSVN. This reflects Hanoi's efforts to rebuild Communist military units and the political apparatus in that part of South Vietnam, both of which have been weakened seriously during recent years. Significant but lesser numbers of North Vietnamese personnel also have traveled to northern MR 1 and the coastal areas of the northern half of South Vietnam.

Manpower Deployments to South Vietnam

13. During the past week, COMINT indicated that the headquarters of two regimental-sized North Vietnamese units had deployed into the northern half of South Vietnam. These moves probably reflect the continuing emphasis by the North Vietnamese on increasing their logistical and air defense capabilities along the new supply corridor in western South Vietnam.

14. The headquarters of Binh Tram 42 was identified on 20 June in the A Shau Valley, east of its former location in Saravane Province of southern Laos. Also, by 21 June, the headquarters of the NVA 46th AAA Regiment (with GDRS subordination) had relocated from its previous location in northeastern Cambodia to Pleiku Province. This is the second North Vietnamese GDRS antiaircraft regiment to deploy into the western Highlands since the cease-fire.

Manpower Deployments in Laos

15. In northern Laos the North Vietnamese 25th Engineer Battalion appears to be withdrawing to North Vietnam. An intercepted message of 21 June revealed that the battalion, which formerly operated in the Plaine des Jarres area near Khang Khay, had arrived at Ban Ban and was scheduled to continue its move on the following day. On 18 June the battalion's 2nd Company had already reached Muong Sen on the Laotian/North Vietnamese border. Although the intercepted messages shed no light on the reason for the battalion's move, there have been indications that a number of North Vietnamese combat units were to reposition for the rainy season to rest and refit, with some possibly returning to North Vietnam as in previous wet seasons.

Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²	VC/NVA	RVNAF
167,000	287,000	80,000	85,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		320B	1st
		312th ³	2nd
		304th	3rd
		711th	Regional Forces
		2nd	

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. Revised RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes present for duty personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions.

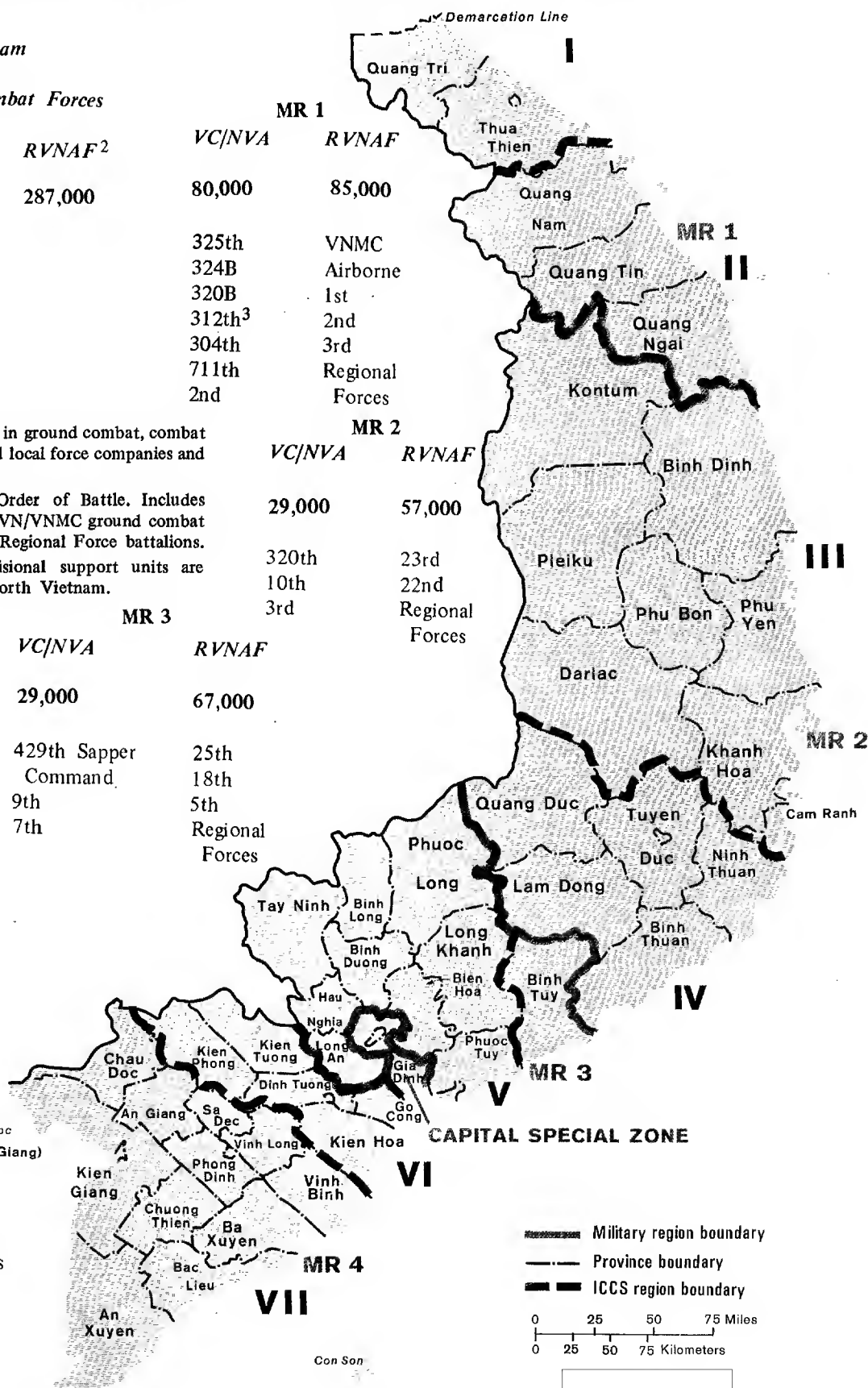
3. The headquarters and divisional support units are currently located deep within North Vietnam.

MR 3

VC/NVA	RVNAF
29,000	67,000
429th Sapper Command	25th
9th	18th
7th	5th
	Regional Forces

MR 4

VC/NVA	RVNAF
29,000	78,000
5th	21st
1st	9th
	7th
	44th Special Tactical Zone
	Regional Forces



25X1

Secret



Secret